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Stabenow, Levin Announce \$200,000 for a Virtual History Museum *Museum to Support Students with Disabilities*

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Debbie Stabenow and Carl Levin (D-MI) announced today that Michigan State University has been awarded \$200,000 from the U.S. Department of Education to develop a virtual history museum that will allow students with mild disabilities to fully participate.

"Providing equal access to all students is essential in our education system," said Levin. "The vision of the Virtual History Museum is the result of leveraging new technologies with our increasingly better understanding of learning disabilities. I was happy to urge the department to provide this grant and help make this vision become a reality."

"You have to know where we have been to understand where we are and where we want to go. Michigan State University's Virtual History Museum will use innovative new technology to help mildly disabled students do just that," said Stabenow. "This important program offers students a fun way to learn history while honing their research skills."

The Virtual History Museum will consist of a web-based history learning environment that can promote the historical understanding of all students and offer cognitive supports and tools that will enable full participation and success for students with mild disabilities. Some features that will assist students with disabilities include text-to-speech capabilities and special instructions that can aid historical understanding. The museum will contain five components:

- an exhibit space displaying historical artifacts;
- an analytical space providing access to information resources and tools to assist students in analyzing the artifacts;
- an interpretation space allowing students to begin constructing their interpretations of the exhibit with support from literacy-based and historical tools;
- a collaboration space allowing students to work with others about their analyses, interpretations and final products; and
- a publication space allowing students to publicly communicate their interpretations of the artifacts on display.

According to professors at Michigan State University, traditionally, students with disabilities have been excluded from social studies classes and thus have had fewer opportunities to learn about history than their peers without disabilities. Increased attention has been placed on developing ways to provide effective and inclusive history instruction for all learners.